

## Educational Opportunity Centers (CFDA No. 84.066)

### I. Legislation

Higher Education Act (HEA) of 1965, as amended, Title IV, Part A, Subpart 2, Chapter 1, Section 402F, P.L. 96-374, as amended by P.L. 102-325 (20 U.S.C. 1070a-11 and 1070a-16) (expires September 30, 1997).

### II. Funding History

<u>Fiscal Year</u>	<u>Appropriation 1/</u>	<u>Fiscal Year</u>	<u>Appropriation 1/</u>
1975	\$3,000,000	1988	\$11,162,663
1980	7,700,000	1989	11,508,875
1981	8,000,674	1990	11,901,990
1982	7,800,000	1991	19,144,000
1983	7,800,000	1992	20,500,000
1984	8,101,898	1993	20,500,000
1985	9,209,468	1994	24,100,000
1986	8,813,523	1995	24,647,217
1987	9,209,531	1996	24,787,942

1/ The appropriations represent the amount allocated administratively by the Department from funds appropriated jointly for all six federal TRIO programs: Upward Bound, Talent Search, Educational Opportunity Centers, Student Support Services, Ronald E. McNair Postbaccalaureate Achievement program, and the Training Program for Special Programs Staff and Leadership Personnel.

### III. Analysis of Program Performance

#### A. Goals and Objectives

The goal of the Educational Opportunity Centers is to provide information on financial and academic assistance available to qualified adults who want to enroll in postsecondary education and to help them apply for admission. The program provides funding for nonfinancial services that students may need in order to explore educational options. These activities are intended to encourage the educational advancement of disadvantaged persons.

#### B. Strategies to Achieve the Goals

##### Services Supported

Educational Opportunity Centers (EOCs) may provide any of the following services:

- Academic, financial, or personal counseling;
- Career exploration and aptitude assessment services;
- Assistance with the process for recently into high school or college;

- Information on postsecondary educational opportunities;
- Assistance in completing applications for college admissions, testing, and financial aid;
- Coordination with nearby postsecondary institutions; and
- Activities designed to involve and acquaint the community with higher education opportunities.

**Educational Opportunity Centers, FY 1996**

Number of New Projects	0
Number of Continuation Projects	74
Average Award	\$334,972
Number of Persons Served	156,686
Average Federal Cost Per Participant	\$158

Participants must live in the target area served by the Educational Opportunity Centers, be age 19 or older, and need services in order to pursue postsecondary education. At least two-thirds of the participants must be low-income persons who are also potential first-generation college students. Persons under age 19 may be served by an EOC if there is no Talent Search project in the target area.

Educational Opportunity Centers programs may be sponsored by institutions of higher education, public and private, nonprofit agencies and organizations, or a combination of such entities. To promote continuity in the delivery of services, grantees that have conducted an Educational Opportunity Centers project during the three years prior to the competition receive “prior experience points.” Up to 15 points can be awarded for the applicant's prior program performance as an EOC grantee. In FY 1994, the last year in which competition was held, the program was expanded by 12 additional grant awards. Competitions are held every fourth and fifth year. (A project period under EOC is four years. However, a project period of five years exists for grantees whose applications score in the highest 10 percent of all applications approved for new grants).

**Strategic Initiatives**

Redesigned performance reports will better measure the success of funded projects in meeting the goals of Educational Opportunity Centers. The Department will use the data to give grantees better feedback on project and student performance that may be used to improve program quality and effectiveness. Data obtained from performance reports will provide baseline information on student success rates that can be compared with national data on low-income, first-generation college students.

The Department developed a revised set of regulations for the Educational Opportunity Centers program. The new regulations increase project accountability for federal funds but allow projects to exercise greater discretion and flexibility in deciding how to deliver services.

### **C. Program Performance—Indicators of Impact and Effectiveness**

The Department has developed a performance indicator system for use in monitoring, evaluating, and managing the TRIO programs. The performance indicators focus on student outcomes and management improvement objectives.

Please see TRIO Programs Performance Measures displayed in Chapter 508. See also Office-Wide Performance Indicators for the Office of Postsecondary Education displayed in the Overview (OPS) to the postsecondary education programs.

The College Board studied Educational Opportunity Centers operating in 1982-83 (V.2). They visited six EOCs and examined the annual performance reports and other program data collected by the Department of Education. The researchers concluded that it is difficult to evaluate program effectiveness because no common method governed the way the projects collect and report data to the program's performance-reporting system, and because no standard definition of "client" exists for recordkeeping and reporting; hence, it has not been possible to measure aggregate program performance. There have been no subsequent evaluations of the Educational Opportunity Centers program. However, redesigned performance reports will make it easier to describe program activities and measure outcome data for each project.

Each Educational Opportunity Center grantee is required to maintain project-level performance objectives and measures. The extent to which these performance measures are met is reported yearly by the grantees on the Department's annual performance report form. Prior experience points can be given to grant applicants that have conducted an Educational Opportunity Center project during the three years preceding a grant competition. Up to 12 prior experience points can be earned, depending on the extent to which the applicant has achieved the performance goals and objectives as stated in the previously funded application or negotiated program plan.

### **IV. Planned Studies**

None.

### **V. Sources of Information**

1. Program files.
2. Paul C. Franklin, Helping Disadvantaged Youth and Adults Enter College: An Assessment of Two Federal Programs (Washington, DC: College Entrance Examination Board, 1985).

### **VI. Contacts for Further Information**

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